



The Role of School Nurses in North Dakota

Children who come to school tired, hungry, and worried cannot learn. Students with health-care needs continue to increase and challenge school districts in terms of staff time, planning, communication and attendance. Education and care of the whole child promotes optimal growth and learning.

A school nurse provides many benefits, including helping to increase attendance, enhance academic growth, improve school climate and support the establishment of lifelong health behaviors. A school nurse is vital to ensuring students are healthy, safe, and ready to learn.

What a school nurse can do for your district:

1. Promote and protect the optimal health status of school age children.
 - Review immunization records and provide those missing immunizations (working with local public health and physicians) or annual influenza injections/mist.
 - Identify health problems via screenings (i.e., vision, hearing, dental, height and weight).
 - Create, monitor, evaluate health-care plans, policies and related record keeping.
 - Administer medication.
 - Assess emergency plans and monitor children with asthma, allergies, diabetes and seizures.
 - Help coordinate medical needs for students served by an IEP or Section 504 plan.
 - Provide mental health screenings in collaboration with educators and school counselors.
 - Maintain, evaluate and interpret cumulative health data to accommodate individual needs of students.
 - Connect families with health-care coverage options.
2. Attend to day-to-day illness or injury.
 - Develop procedures and provide for emergency nursing management for injuries/illnesses.
 - Assess injury prevention (playground, bike safety, seat belts, fire).
3. Participate in health education and physical education curriculum development.
 - Work with teachers on joint/co-teaching health-related topics and medical-related careers.
 - Teach first aid and CPR/AED training.
4. Develop and assess staff worksite wellness programs.
5. Provide parent trainings on health-related topics.
 - Participate in home visits to assess family needs as related to the child's health.
 - Participate in health aspects of kindergarten pre-registration.
6. Initiate referral to parents, school personnel or community health resources for diagnosis, treatment and follow through.
 - Provide ongoing health counseling with students, parents, school personnel or health agencies.
 - Promote appropriate re-entry services for returning students after extended health-related absences.
7. Plan and implement school health management protocols.
 - Promote and assist in the control of communicable diseases.
 - Engage in evaluation of school health services to act as a change agent for school health and academic gains.
 - Provide consultation in the formation of health policies, goals and objectives for the school district and possibly facilitate school health council.
 - Prepare budget for school health supplies.

- Prepare first aid kits for each building, sport teams, buses, etc.
 - Assist with crisis plan development, drills and implementation of services.
 - Develop health-care initiatives based on need (i.e., training school staff on relevant health issues).
8. Work with administration and school board to implement a coordinated school health model which encompasses health education, physical education, health services, nutrition services, counseling and psychological services, healthy school environment, staff health promotion and family/community involvement.

The list above is not inclusive of all duties, and may vary depending on hours worked, available services and other district factors.

A school nurse should be available for all kindergarten through high school students as varying developmental needs require professional care and consultation. Sharing a school nurse between two small neighboring districts could be considered; access and care needs should be considered a priority rather than a nurse-student ratio when determining nurse staffing.

A typical nine-to-10 month contract for a registered nurse in North Dakota averages \$46,691 (Job Service North Dakota 2014) and a district budget should include salary, benefits and necessary office/related supplies. Title I school-wide funds and select Career & Technical Education funds can be used to support school nurse budgets. Best practice supports a bachelor degree in nursing which ensures the quality of necessary and preferred skill sets.

School nursing services are a cost-beneficial investment of public money. Data published by the American Medical Association in 2009 pertaining to cost benefit analysis in Massachusetts prevented an estimated \$20 million in medical care costs, \$28.1 million in parents' productivity loss, and \$129.1 million in teachers' productivity loss. The program generated a return on investment of \$98.2 million.

Having a school nurse can be beneficial to both schools and students. The many benefits ensure that children are healthy and able to learn, that teachers and administrators can refer appropriate students to a school nurse and save time spent addressing health concerns. School nurses can promote staff wellness programs and incorporate this into school outcomes. In addition, school nurses can connect schools and parents with community resources.

The role and need for school nurses is supported by many North Dakota organizations, including North Dakota Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, North Dakota School Nurse Organization, North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, North Dakota Department of Health, North Dakota Department of Human Services, Regional Education Associations, North Dakota Optometric Association, Diabetes Association and American Heart Association.



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